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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA  
SAN JOSE DIVISION

CARL OTIS SULLIVAN,  
Plaintiff,  
v.  
WILLIAM MUNIZ,  
Defendant.

Case No. [5:17-cv-05174-EJD](#)

**ORDER DENYING DEFENDANT'S  
PETITION FOR WRIT OF HABEAS  
CORPUS (28 U.S.C. § 2254)**

Re: Dkt. No. 1

Sullivan was convicted by a jury in the Superior Court of the State of California in and for the City and County of San Francisco of first-degree burglary. After waiving a jury for proof of prior convictions, the trial court found that a February 13, 1998 robbery conviction was a strike and a serious felony, but that the prosecution failed to prove the other special allegations. On March 14, 2014, Sullivan was sentenced to a state prison term of nine years.

On February 11, 2016, the First District California Court of Appeal upheld the trial court's decision that the prosecutor's peremptory strike was not a racially discriminatory peremptory strike and confirmed that sufficient evidence supported the verdict. *People v. Sullivan*, 2016 WL 556133, at \*1 (Cal. Ct. App. Feb. 11, 2016). The California Supreme Court denied review on June 8, 2016. Dkt. 13-5, Ex. 8.

Sullivan then filed the instant federal petition for writ of habeas corpus under 28 U.S.C. § 2254. Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus ("Mot."), Dkt. 1. Pursuant to an order to show cause why the writ should not be granted, Defendant ("the Government") filed an answer. Memorandum of Points and Authorities in Support of Answer to Order to Show Cause ("Opp."),

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1 Dkt. 13-1. Sullivan filed a traverse. Traverse to Respondent's Answer ("Reply"), Dkt. 17.

2 **I. BACKGROUND**

3 The California Court of Appeal summarized the facts of the case as follows:

4 [April-Lynn] Bond testified that she lived in a one-bedroom  
5 apartment in a house on Buchanan Street. A flight of stairs from the  
6 sidewalk led to a walkway that in turn led to the front door of Bond's  
7 apartment on the side of the house. Her living room was just inside  
8 the building's front windows and was next to her bedroom.

9 At about 8:00 a.m. on October 10, 2012, Bond called in sick  
10 to work and planned to stay in bed. The window to Bond's bedroom  
11 was partially open and the blinds were down. The living room  
12 windows were closed and the blinds were down. Bond's purse, work  
13 bag, work computer, home computer, and wallet were on a table in  
14 the kitchen. While laying in bed, Bond heard voices and banging in  
15 an alleyway where the garbage and recycling are kept. It sounded like  
16 the speaker was engaging in a conversation. She then heard a very  
17 clear voice coming from inside her apartment saying something like,  
18 "Oh, dude, this is my worst fucking nightmare." Peeking through a  
19 gap in the doors to her bedroom, Bond saw Sullivan, whom she did  
20 not know, inside her apartment coming from the direction of the living  
21 room windows. Bond grabbed her phone, climbed out a bedroom  
22 window, and called 911 as she made her way to the street.<sup>2</sup>

23 Officer Matthew Lobre, who was dispatched in response to  
24 Bond's 911 call, arrived in uniform driving a patrol car. He spotted  
25 Bond and asked for a description of the intruder. She indicated there  
26 were two people and started to describe one as a White male with long  
27 scraggly hair and jeans when she interjected, "There he is, that's him."  
28 She pointed behind Lobre to Sullivan, who was walking down the  
front steps of her building. Lobre approached Sullivan and asked him  
to put his hands behind his back. Sullivan was calm and cooperative.  
As Lobre handcuffed him, Sullivan said, "This is my house. What did  
she say? She let me in."

When Bond reentered her apartment, she noticed the front window was open, the floor Sullivan had walked on was dirty, a nearby space heater had been unplugged, and a jacket and glove that did not belong to her were in the living room. Her purse, work bag, work computer, home computer, and wallet and its contents were undisturbed. None of the drawers in a living room bookshelf had been opened, and no other property was missing from her apartment.

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<sup>2</sup> Bond's 911 call was played for the jury. Bond told the dispatcher that she thought someone was breaking into her house. She stated, "I just ran out of my bedroom window because someone came in my front window. [¶] . . . [¶] . . . It was 2 voices. And somebody said 'This is my worst fucking nightmare.'" Bond could be then be heard telling an arriving police officer to go up the first set of stairs.

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1 Inspector Paul Doherty interviewed Sullivan in a hospital  
2 while he was treated for an abscess on his left forearm. The interview  
3 was recorded and an edited version was played for the jury. Sullivan  
4 told Doherty that he was willing to talk because he had done nothing  
5 wrong. Doherty asked him, “So you’ve used—you said, uh, you’ve  
6 been up the last couple of days, but you’re not under the influence  
7 right now. You’re sober and you feel good enough to talk to me about  
8 this incident?” Sullivan responded, “Yeah, dude. I’ve tried to go to  
9 sleep 10 times but I can’t seem to be left alone.” Later in the interview  
10 Sullivan said, “I’ve been up for four fuckin’ days. No one wants to  
11 give me no food or water . . .” Doherty testified that Sullivan did  
12 not appear to be in pain during the interview, and he appeared to  
13 understand the questions that were posed to him.

14 Sullivan said he inherited part ownership of the building  
15 where Bond lived from a man he met in the park. The man had left  
16 the property to Sullivan and a girl whose name was something like  
17 Emma or Maggie. An attorney told Sullivan about the inheritance  
18 and said he would deliver paperwork to Sullivan at the home. On  
19 October 10, 2012, the attorney, Sullivan and the girl met at the  
20 property. “I went over there to meet her and talk about how we were  
21 gonna figure out the rent. And she’d been living there for a while,  
22 too, since dude died.” When Sullivan arrived, the building was locked  
23 up and no one would answer the door. Sullivan told the girl, “Listen,  
24 you can’t keep me out of my own fuckin’ house,” and the girl “opened  
25 the window [and] told me I could go in there.” Sullivan said, “They  
26 don’t go through doors, bro. I’m telling you, man. They go through  
27 fuckin’ windows, like a little leprechaun or something, dude.” The  
28 girl went through the window with Sullivan, but then left through the  
same window. Sullivan said, “I just waited [about 20 minutes] for her  
[to return]. . . . And then I heard something and I looked out the door  
and there’s a police officer. . . . And I came right out [through the  
window] . . . ¶ . . . ¶ . . . [a]s soon as he said something.”

Sullivan told the officer that he had inherited the building, but  
he was still arrested for burglary. “I didn’t burglarize shit, nothing’s  
broken, nothing’s missing. I didn’t take nothing. That was not my  
intent. I was told that was my place and I was trying to hash out with  
this chick about how we’re gonna handle the bills and—’cause I’m  
homeless. I’m moving in.” He added, “I had no intent—I don’t need  
no dope. I didn’t get high since yesterday.” Sullivan acknowledged  
that he left his coat, phone charger and glove in the apartment.  
Doherty asked Sullivan why Bond would say that he broke into her  
apartment, and Sullivan responded, “I don’t think she wants me to  
live there to be honest with you. I think she wants the whole ball of  
wax for herself.” Doherty did not investigate Sullivan’s story because  
“I can’t investigate every crazy story that’s told me.”

The prosecution rested following the testimony of Bond,  
Lobre, and Doherty. The trial court denied Sullivan’s motion for a  
directed verdict pursuant to section 1118.1 on the charge of entry with  
the intent to commit theft.

1 Sullivan's only witness was Richard Osborn,<sup>3</sup> who testified  
2 that he was walking his child to school down Buchanan Street at about  
3 8:00 a.m. on the day of the incident. He heard "some undecipherable  
4 noises coming from the bushes [in front of Bond's building], which  
5 was enough to startle us to kind of step away from the bushes, and  
6 keep going towards school." The noise was "[s]ort of a garbled  
7 speech. I couldn't decipher any of the words, but it was someone's  
8 voice." "[S]ort of grunting sounds, in a way," "maybe a little louder  
9 than a soft mumble." When he walked by again on his way back  
10 home, he saw "a gentleman standing in front of the bushes on the  
11 sidewalk. [¶] . . . I made an assumption that's probably whose voice  
12 we had heard before." The man was Caucasian with disheveled  
13 blonde shoulder-length hair and could have been Sullivan. "I noticed  
14 that he walked into the street, and I noticed a woman also crossing  
15 from the other side of the sidewalk. [¶] He seemed to walk towards  
16 her not aggressively, but it seemed . . . that maybe she was slightly  
17 avoiding him, walking away." Neither person seemed aggressive and  
18 Osborn did not see a need to intervene. However, he reported the  
19 incident to 911. Osborn did not return a call from the district  
20 attorney's office shortly before trial.

21 *Sullivan*, 2016 WL 556133, at \*1–3.

## 22 **II. LEGAL STANDARD**

23 This Court may entertain a petition for writ of habeas corpus on "behalf of a person in  
24 custody pursuant to the judgment of a State court only on the ground that he is in custody in  
25 violation of the Constitution or laws or treaties of the United States." 28 U.S.C. § 2254(a).

26 The writ may not be granted with respect to any claim that was adjudicated on the merits in  
27 state court unless the state court's adjudication of the claim: "(1) resulted in a decision that was  
28 contrary to, or involved an unreasonable application of, clearly established Federal law, as  
determined by the Supreme Court of the United States; or (2) resulted in a decision that was based  
on an unreasonable determination of facts in light of the evidence presented in the State court  
proceeding." *Id.* § 2254(d). The determination of a "factual issue made by a State court shall be  
presumed to be correct. The applicant shall have the burden of rebutting the presumption of  
correctness by clear and convincing evidence." *Id.* § 2254(e)(1).

29 This case is governed by the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996  
30 ("AEDPA"), which imposes a "highly deferential" standard for evaluating state court rulings and

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31 <sup>3</sup> As discussed *post*, Sullivan also called two police officers whose testimony was later stricken.

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1 “demands the state court decisions be given the benefit of the doubt.” *Woodford v. Visciotti*, 537  
2 U.S. 19, 24 (2002) (per curiam). Thus, under the “contrary to” clause, a federal court may grant a  
3 writ of habeas corpus only if the state court “arrives at a conclusion opposite to that reached by  
4 [the Supreme] Court on a question of law or if the state court decides a case differently than [the]  
5 Court has on a set of materially indistinguishable facts.” *Williams v. Taylor*, 529 U.S. 362, 412–  
6 13 (2000). The question under AEDPA is not “whether a federal court believes the state court’s  
7 determination was incorrect,” but “whether that determination was unreasonable—a substantially  
8 higher threshold.” *Schrivo v. Landrigan*, 550 U.S. 465, 473 (2007). This high standard is meant  
9 to be “difficult to meet.” *Greene v. Fisher*, 565 U.S. 34, 43 (2011).

10 **III. DISCUSSION**

11 Sullivan raises two claims for relief under § 2254: he argues (1) that the trial court erred in  
12 determining the prosecution’s preemptory challenge was not racially based and (2) that the  
13 conviction is unsupported by sufficient evidence. *See Mot.* at 3–6.

14 **A. Racial Discrimination in Jury Selection**

15 **1. Legal Standard<sup>1</sup>**

16 Under *Batson v. Kentucky*, 476 U.S. 79 (1986), a defendant’s challenge to a peremptory  
17 strike allegedly based on race requires, among other things, that the trial court determine whether  
18 the defendant has carried his burden of proving purposeful discrimination. *Rice v. Collins*, 546  
19 U.S. 333, 973–74 (2006). Because of AEDPA, a federal court may only grant a habeas petition on  
20 *Batson* grounds if it was “unreasonable” for the state court, in light of the evidence presented in  
21 the state court proceeding, to credit the prosecutor’s race-neutral explanations. *Id.*

22 \_\_\_\_\_  
23 <sup>1</sup> To the extent a dispute exists about whether to apply Section 2254(d) or (e) to a state court’s  
24 prima face finding, see Opp. at 9 & n.7, the Court concludes it is unnecessary to resolve that at this  
25 time. Under either, habeas relief is unavailable as AEDPA’s statutory presumption of correctness  
26 applies since the trial court did not apply the wrong legal standard. *Crittenden v. Chappell*, 804  
27 F.3d 998, 1021 (9th Cir. 2015) (“In light of AEDPA’s mandate, ‘we normally review the state trial  
court’s fact-specific determination of whether a defendant has made a prima facie case of a *Batson*  
violation deferentially, applying AEDPA’s ‘statutory presumption of correctness.’ In contrast,  
“where the trial court has applied the wrong legal standard, AEDPA’s rule of deference does not  
apply.” (citations omitted)).

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1 A defendant's *Batson* challenge to a peremptory strike requires a three-step inquiry. *Id.* at  
2 338.

3 First, the trial court must determine whether the defendant has made  
4 a prima facie showing that the prosecutor exercised a peremptory  
5 challenge on the basis of race. Second, if the showing is made, the  
6 burden shifts to the prosecutor to present a race-neutral explanation  
7 for striking the juror in question. Although the prosecutor must  
8 present a comprehensible reason, “[t]he second step of this process  
9 does not demand an explanation that is persuasive, or even plausible”;  
10 so long as the reason is not inherently discriminatory, it suffices.  
11 Third, the court must then determine whether the defendant has  
12 carried his burden of proving purposeful discrimination. This final  
13 step involves evaluating “the persuasiveness of the justification”  
14 proffered by the prosecutor, but “the ultimate burden of persuasion  
15 regarding racial motivation rests with, and never shifts from, the  
16 opponent of the strike.”

17 *Id.* (citations omitted).

18 In deciding whether the defendant has made the requisite showing to satisfy the first  
19 *Batson* step, the trial court should “consider all relevant circumstances.” *Batson*, 476 U.S. at 96.  
20 A “pattern of strikes” against black jurors included in the particular venire may give rise to an  
21 inference of discrimination. *Id.* A defendant satisfies the requirements of *Batson*'s first step by  
22 “producing evidence sufficient to permit the trial judge to draw an inference that discrimination  
23 has occurred.” *Johnson v. California*, 545 U.S. 162, 169 (2005).

24 Regarding the third step, confidence should be placed in trial judges, experienced in  
25 supervising *voir dire*, to decide if the defense has shown a prima facie case of discrimination  
26 against black jurors. *Batson*, 476 U.S. at 96. Unlike the reviewing court, the trial court had the  
27 benefit of personally witnessing the *voir dire* and thus the trial judge is “able to observe a juror’s  
28 attention span, alertness, and interest in the proceedings and thus will have a sense of whether the  
prosecutor’s challenge can be readily explained by a legitimate reason.” *Id.* at 683. Mere  
disagreement with the trial court’s ruling as to the neutrality of a peremptory strike does not  
compel reversal. *Id.* at 342. To the contrary, if “[r]easonable minds reviewing the record might  
disagree about the prosecutor’s credibility, . . . on habeas review that does not suffice to supersede  
the trial court’s credibility determination.” *Id.* The role of the federal habeas court in reviewing a

1      *Batson* claim is to “guard against *extreme* malfunctions in the state criminal justice systems, not to  
2 apply *de novo* review of factual findings and to substitute its own opinions for the determination  
3 made on the scene by the trial judge.” *Davis v. Ayala*, 135 S. Ct. 2187, 2202 (2015) (citation  
4 omitted). Indeed, a state trial court’s determination of whether a *prima facie* case has been made  
5 is a presumptively correct factual finding. *Tolbert v. Page*, 182 F.3d 677, 685 (9th Cir. 1999)  
6 (citing 28 U.S.C. § 2254(d)).

7                    **2. Background**

8      During jury selection, a question arose regarding the prosecutor’s use of a peremptory  
9 challenge to excuse Juror No. 3370857 (“Juror 19”). Juror 19, in response to questioning from the  
10 trial court, stated he retired from the City and County of San Francisco, where he worked as a  
11 supervisor in the Department of Public Works. His wife, who was also retired, served on the  
12 Board of Supervisors for the City and County. *See Sullivan*, 2016 WL 556133 at \*4.

13      Juror 19 also stated that he served on a civil jury about 15 years earlier. *Id.* The only thing  
14 he recalled about the case was that it involved entrapment and was held at the same location as the  
15 current case. When asked whether a police officer was on trial, the juror responded, “Highway  
16 patrol was involved in it. And the defendant, you know, he thought he was being entrapped, you  
17 know, by both sides.” *Id.* He recalled the jury service being a good experience in which it was  
18 easy for the jurors to reach a verdict because the evidence was very convincing. *Id.* He also stated  
19 that he would not have any problem applying “common-sense logic” to the evidence presented.  
20 *Id.*

21      The prosecutor exercised a peremptory challenge to remove Juror 19 from the jury.  
22 Defense counsel and the court later made a record of the issue. Defense counsel argued, “[Juror  
23 19] is the only African-American man in grand venire, meaning all the prospective jurors in the  
24 room. [¶] And I said that it did not appear there was any race-neutral reason for excusing him  
25 based on the testimony that is already in the record.” *Id.* at \*5. The court denied this  
26 *Batson/Wheeler* objection because Sullivan “failed to make [the required] *prima facie*” showing of

1 group bias since “merely stating that the opposing party has used its peremptory challenge to  
2 exclude a member of a particular group is not enough.” *Id.* Additionally, Juror 19 was not the  
3 only African-American—there was at least one other African-American person in the grand  
4 venire; a woman, who the court excused for cause because she indicated she could not be fair to  
5 the defense. Dkt. 13-9 at ECF 12. While “African-Americans” would constitute a recognizable  
6 group, “an African-American *male* is [not] a recognizable group.” *Id.* (emphasis added).

7 Nonetheless, even though the court found “no prima facie showing,” it invited the  
8 prosecutor to state his reasons for the peremptory challenge. *Id.* at ECF 13. First, he noted that  
9 the juror stated he had served on a civil jury but then described it as being about “entrapment.” *Id.*  
10 The prosecutor believed this showed a lack of understanding of the issues because the juror  
11 focused only on the defense argument of entrapment, rather than on the charges, and had  
12 apparently confused a civil case with a criminal case. *Id.* Second, he noted the juror’s wife had  
13 been in a political position in San Francisco and “if he experienced or shared any of her  
14 experiences at work, [he may have] possible biases into the criminal process in the criminal court  
15 system.” *Id.*

16 Defense counsel responded: “The prosecution said in the hallway [immediately after the  
17 challenge] things that are not what he is saying here. [¶] . . . [H]e made no mention of a wife  
18 being an ex-supervisor” or “reference to the idea that there might have been a civil or criminal trial  
19 mixup.” *Id.* at ECF 14. Defense counsel thought it was “clear” Juror 19 said he was part of a  
20 criminal trial and that it was “clear” when the juror stated he felt the defendant was entrapped by  
21 both sides, he was referring to the multiple law enforcement agencies involved in the case. *Id.*  
22 Defense counsel argued “[i]t is *not* a reasonable, justifiable interpretation of this record that the  
23 prosecutor here felt that [Juror 19] was confused about anything.” *Id.*

24 The trial court found “no prima facie case” was shown. *Id.* at ECF 15. Further, even if it  
25 had been shown, the court found “by a preponderance of the evidence that the neutral reasons  
26 were genuine, especially [] when . . . [Juror 19] described the nature of the case . . . as []

1 ‘entrapment,’ [] which is a legal defense.” *Id.* The court thus denied the *Batson-Wheeler* motion.

2 *Id.*

3 **3. Analysis**

4 **Batson Step-One.** Sullivan first argues that because the trial court invited the prosecutor  
5 to present a race-neutral explanation, *Batson* step one is moot. Mot. at 3. Notably, however, the  
6 trial court clearly ruled that “no prima facie case” was met before inviting that explanation.  
7 Compare Dkt. 13-9 at ECF 13, with *Hernandez v. New York*, 500 U.S. 352, 359 (1991) (holding  
8 once prosecutor offered race-neutral explanation, *Batson* step one was moot since the trial court  
9 never decided whether prima facie showing of discriminatory purpose was made). Thus, here,  
10 *Batson* step one was not moot and, as the Court of Appeal found, a challenge to the one Black  
11 male was insufficient, without more, to establish a prima facie case. *Sullivan*, 2016 WL 556133 at  
12 \*5. Sullivan does not provide this Court with *any* federal case or “clearly established Supreme  
13 Court precedent” to the contrary.

14 Sullivan next argues that there was some “dispute” about whether Juror 19 was the only  
15 African-American in the grand venire. Mot. at 3. Sullivan, however, does not explain why this is  
16 helpful in providing “clear and convincing evidence” to rebut the trial court’s factual findings  
17 under Section 2254(e)(1). Opp. at 10. Moreover, the Court of Appeal upheld the trial court’s  
18 prima facie finding on *other* grounds, thus rendering the “dispute” irrelevant. The Court of  
19 Appeal cited two alternative grounds to support its finding that the trial court did not abuse its  
20 discretion: (1) a single prosecution challenge to a Black juror, without more, is legally insufficient  
21 to make a prima facie showing and (2) Sullivan did not elaborate on his claim beyond arguing that  
22 no race-neutral reason existed. *Sullivan*, 2016 WL 556133 at \*5. Thus, because Sullivan did not  
23 provide sufficient evidence to “permit the trial judge to draw an inference that discrimination []  
24 occurred,” the state court’s prima facie finding binds this Court pursuant to Section 2254.  
25 *Johnson*, 545 U.S. at 170; see also *Sullivan*, 2016 WL 556133 at \*5 (noting no “pattern” of strikes  
26 against African American jurors or “desultory” voir dire shown); cf. *Miller-El v. Cockrell*, 537

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U.S. 322, 342 (2003) (holding statistical evidence raised a debate about whether prosecution acted with race-based reason when used peremptory strikes to exclude 91% of the eligible African-American venire members).

Accordingly, the trial court reasonably found that defense counsel did not meet their prima facie burden of showing a race-based reason for the prosecutor's peremptory strike of Juror 19.<sup>2</sup>

**Batson Step-Three.** The Court of Appeal concluded that the trial court did not abuse its discretion in finding that the challenge was not racially discriminatory. *Sullivan*, 2016 WL 556133 at \*5; *see also Briggs v. Grounds*, 682 F.3d 1165, 1170 (9th Cir. 2012) (“[O]ur standard is doubly deferential: unless the state appellate court was objectively unreasonable in concluding that a trial court’s credibility determination was supported by substantial evidence, we must uphold it.”).

Sullivan does not meet his heavy burden. He only identifies factors, like the fact that the juror had been a burglary victim, that *could* support the trial court deciding the peremptory challenge in his favor—this is insufficient as a matter of law. Mot. at 5; *see also Davis*, 135 S. Ct. at 2199–2200 (holding that federal habeas court may only overturn unreasonable findings of fact, not ones it simply disagrees with). The appellate court rejected this argument and instead concluded the trial court was reasonable in finding no *Batson* violation because: (1) it had the benefit of witnessing the juror and (2) “the record tends to support the prosecutor’s position that the juror was confused about the nature of the prior case.” *Sullivan*, 2016 WL 556133 at \*5.

While Sullivan identifies *Miller-El* as a contrary legal proposition, that case is inapplicable. As noted above, the defense in *Miller-El* identified a pattern, spanning decades, of prosecutors using peremptory strikes to exclude groups of African-American jurors. 545 U.S. at 263. That fact scenario is not present here. And so, because the trial court’s finding was reasonable, pursuant to “double deference,” this Court may not disrupt the holdings below that the prosecutor met his

<sup>2</sup> The Court could end its discussion here. But, because the Court of Appeal addressed the third step of the *Batson* analysis, this Court briefly addresses it.

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1 burden of showing race-neutral reasons for the peremptory strike of Juror 19.

2 For these reasons, Sullivan's *Batson* challenge is **DENIED**.

3 **B. Sufficiency of the Evidence of Burglary**

4 Sullivan next argues that the trial court erred in denying a motion for judgment of acquittal  
5 pursuant to 1118.1 because the jury was presented with insufficient evidence to support his  
6 conviction for burglary. Mot. at 5–7.

7 Under California law, burglary requires proof of “an entry into a specified structure with  
8 the intent to commit theft or any felony,” regardless of whether “any felony or theft actually is  
9 committed” therein. *People v. Montoya*, 874 P.2d 903, 911 (Cal. 1994). The Court of Appeal  
10 held all the elements of burglary were supported by “substantial evidence.” *Sullivan*, 2016 WL  
11 556133 at \*10. Evidence is constitutionally sufficient to support a conviction when, upon  
12 “viewing the evidence in the light most favorable to the prosecution, *any* rational trier of fact  
13 could have found the essential elements of the crime beyond a reasonable doubt.” *Jackson v.*  
14 *Virginia*, 443 U.S. 307, 319 (1979). The reviewing court must presume the trier of fact resolved  
15 any conflicts in the evidence in favor of the prosecution and must defer to that resolution. *Id.* at  
16 326. The jury, not the court, decides what conclusions should be drawn from evidence admitted at  
17 trial. *Cavazos v. Smith*, 565 U.S. 1, 2 (2011) (per curiam). The jury’s credibility determinations,  
18 thus, are entitled to near-total deference. *Bruce v. Terhune*, 376 F.3d 950, 957 (9th Cir. 2004).

19 Sufficiency of the evidence claims (*Jackson* claims) face a “high bar” in federal habeas  
20 proceedings because they also are subject to two layers of judicial deference. *Coleman v.*  
21 *Johnson*, 566 U.S. 650, 651 (2012). The court may not overturn a state court decision simply  
22 because it disagrees with it; it may only do so if the decision is “objectively unreasonable.” *Id.*  
23 The only question is “whether the finding was so insupportable as to fall below the threshold of  
24 bare rationality.” *Id.* at 656.

25 Sullivan argues that, viewing the facts in the light most favorable to him, burglary is not  
26 shown. See Mot. at 7. He recites facts supporting his argument that he believed he owned the

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1 apartment and thus lacked the specific intent necessary for burglary. *Id.* He also argues that  
2 because he did not take anything from the apartment, he could not have committed burglary. *Id.*

3 This recitation of facts, however, does not show the jury's decision was "objectively  
4 unreasonable." *Coleman v. Johnson*, 566 U.S. at 650. First, there is no legal requirement that he  
5 take something from the apartment in order to burglarize it. *See Montoya*, 874 P.2d at 911.  
6 Further, as the appellate court held, "Sullivan's intent to commit theft was supported by  
7 circumstantial evidence." *Sullivan*, 2016 WL 556133 at \*10. Circumstantial evidence, and  
8 inferences drawn from it, may be sufficient to sustain a conviction. *Ngo v. Girubino*, 651 F.3d  
9 1112, 1115 (9th Cir. 2011). The jury could infer from the evidence and their common experience  
10 that "the only reasonable inference was that Sullivan had a guilty rather than an innocent intent  
11 because [his] uncorroborated and highly improbable explanation for his entry into the apartment  
12 lacked all credibility." *Sullivan*, 2016 WL 556133 at \*10; *Coleman*, 566 U.S. at 656 ("The state  
13 court of last review did not think so, and that determination in turn is entitled to considerable  
14 deference under AEDPA, 28 U.S.C. § 2254(d)). The Court, thus, cannot disturb this jury finding.  
15 *See Bruce*, 376 F.3d at 957.

16 Finally, while Sullivan notes that the San Francisco police did not investigate his argument  
17 that he lawfully inherited the apartment from an unidentified man in the park, Mot. at 6–7, he does  
18 not identify any Supreme Court precedent holding that the failure to do so renders the verdict  
19 "objectively unreasonable."

20 For these reasons, Sullivan's *Jackson* challenge is **DENIED**.

21 **IV. CONCLUSION**

22 Accordingly, the petition for writ of habeas corpus is **DENIED**.

23 **IT IS SO ORDERED.**

24 Dated: October 18, 2019



EDWARD J. DAVILA  
United States District Judge

25  
26  
27 Case No.: [5:17-cv-05174-EJD](#)  
28 ORDER DENYING DEFENDANT'S PETITION FOR WRIT OF HABEAS CORPUS (28 U.S.C.  
§ 2254)